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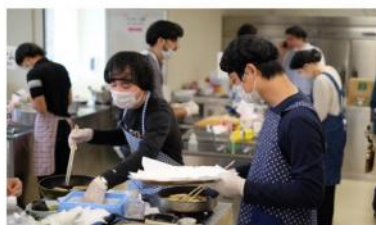
Autumn in Itoshima

How-to: Celebrate
Japanese New Year



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The Profound Beauty of Autumn in Itoshima

Angana Borah, B3 IUPE

Ito area of Fukuoka has some of the best places to experience the magnificent autumn. Raizan Sennyoji Dai-Hioun temple and Shiraito Waterfall are two such places. I have had the privilege to visit those places twice already; nonetheless, every time I go I am wonderstruck at the exquisiteness of nature that can be experienced there. Apart from these places, I also visited the Sakurai shrine and Futamigaura beach. As the weather cools in October and November, leaves begin to change color and suddenly the landscape is a dramatic palette of red, brown, orange, yellow and green. The koyo leaves of late autumn are a breathtaking sight, and Itoshima is one such tiny wonder for a little nature loving for everyone.



Photo credits: Explore Itoshima

IT'S OYSTER TIME!

The picturesque Itoshima coastline is home to many local fishing ports. Here is where you find the famous oyster huts or as they are commonly called, Kakigoya. Barbecuing fresh oysters is an experience that every Fukuoka-jin must have!

Apart from oysters, sea snails, squids, and various other seafood straight out of the ocean are charcoaled at these huts. The most popular choice in Itoshima is the do-it-yourself charcoal grilling, and most of the kakigoya allow people to bring in their own alcoholic beverage, homemade sauces, rice, condiments etc. They are open until late March; so all sea-food aficionados out there, make sure to give them a try for a unique dining experience!



Photo credits: Ardy Nur Ihsan

Celebrating New Year in Japan

Oshogatsu (お正月) is New Year's holiday in Japan and generally celebrated from January 1 to January 7. Families gather to spend the days together. Here are some ways on how to celebrate New Years in Japan with your friends.

Most typical customs would be “Toshikoshi soba”, “Osechi” and “Hatsumode”. “Toshikoshi soba” (年越しそば) is Japanese noodles served on the New Year's Eve, symbolising longevity. Some Japanese eat udon instead of soba. On the very first morning in the New Year, people also eat “Osechi” (おせち), which are specially prepared New Year's dishes,



“Osechi”

beautifully arranged in lacquer boxes. Most dishes are cooked to be preserved for at least three days so people don't have to cook during that period. People also practice “Hatsumode” (初詣) or the first visit to a shrine, usually a Shinto shrine, to make New Year's wishes for health and happiness.

Want to know more? Here are the stories even Japanese don't know so much. It is said that the *kami* of New Year visit families to bring happiness for the year. (Since ancient times, Japanese have expressed the divine energy or life-force of the natural world as *kami*. e.g. the *kami* of rain, the *kami* of wind, etc.) As a

preparation to welcome the *kami* of New Year, Japanese do “Osouji” (大掃除: Deep house cleaning) in the end of December. During Oshogatsu, they decorate the front door of houses with “Kadomatsu” (門松: Decorative pine branches) as a sign of the gate and place “Kagami mochi” (鏡餅: round mochi cakes) where the *kami* of New Year stay during the visit.

“Kagami mochi”



CREATIVE CORNER



THE GATE FOR FINDING INNER PEACE

PHOTO BY: GDE PANDHE WISNU SUYANTARA, INDONESIA

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT:

Czarina Rodriguez

